The Aesthetic Ethos of Learning: A Philosophical Study of Benu Misra's Paintings and their Relevance to Contemporary Indian Education

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Abstract

By fusing intellectual growth with artistic expression, the Aesthetic Ethos of Learning goes beyond the traditional bounds of education. The pursuit of knowledge is emphasized as an immersive experience that stimulates the senses, emotions, and imagination rather than only being a cognitive exercise. This ethos, which has its roots in the idea that education ought to be a dynamic and transformational process, encourages students to view the world not only according to reason and analysis but also in terms of harmony, beauty, and artistic sensibility. In this setting, knowledge is transformed into an artistic creation that is influenced by the learner's enthusiasm, curiosity, and individual interpretation. Cultural values and intellectual traditions have long been communicated through the transformational prism provided by the junction of art, philosophy, and education. The aesthetic and philosophical aspects of Benu Misra's contemporary paintings are examined in this research study as a means of reflecting and motivating educational ideals derived from Indian philosophical traditions. The study aims to restore the significance of indigenous thought systems and aesthetic experiences in creating a more comprehensive educational framework against the backdrop of contemporary Indian education, which frequently tends toward technocratic and standardized approaches.

Keywords: Aesthetic, Ethos, Learning, Philosophical, Benu Misra, Paintings, Relevance,Contemporary, Indian Education.

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Introduction

Benu Misra is a trailblazing contemporary Assamese artist whose work is profoundly influenced by aesthetic reflection and sociopolitical awareness. By encouraging holistic growth, critical awareness, and emotional depth, the article contends that Misra's aesthetic praxis his blending of color, form, narrative, and existential concern offers a fresh aesthetic ethos that might enhance modern Indian education. Born in Barpeta in 1939, he attended Kala Bhavana in Santiniketan and made important achievements, including the establishment of the Guwahati Artists' Guild in 1976. His body of work includes sculptures, oil paintings, graphic design, drawings, and cover art that all have a strong narrative and sociopolitical bent. This study positions Benu Misra's paintings as a resource with philosophical depth and cultural roots that can revitalize Indian educational systems in addition to being an artistic expression. Benu Misra's artistic brilliance has a significant influence on contemporary art, ranging from painting, sculpture, and sketching to graphic design and cartoons. The master and most renowned artist in contemporary art is Benu Misra. When discussing painting, Benu Misra is known for his cover painting and for being the founder of the Guwahati Artist Guild.

His unique approach gave contemporary art a remarkable touch in Assam. Benu Misra began his artistic endeavors in the 1960s. Since he entered Assam's contemporary modern art scene, especially in the field of publishing, he

has established an unrealistic standard for cover art and evocative art using his artistic and fashionable approach.

The cover art and descriptive art of popular magazines such as Navayug, which was published in the 1960s, Bismoi, which was published a bit later, and Prakash, which was published by the Assam Publication Board, are particularly noteworthy examples in this field.

The outstanding creations of Benus Misra are unique. The paper will explore the Aesthetic Ethos of Learning with a Philosophical Study of Benu Misra's Paintings and their Relevance to Contemporary Indian Education.

Background of the Study

This study's grounding lies in the nexus of philosophy, art, and education, especially in light of India's changing educational system. A pioneer of contemporary art of Assam, Benu Misra is renowned for his unique visual language, which combines socio-political commentary, cultural symbolism, and emotional depth. His creations exhibit a deep aesthetic sensibility that is consistent with more general philosophical traditions that highlight the influence of art on moral consciousness and human knowledge. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which promotes experiential, value-based, and arts-integrated learning, reflects the paradigm shift that is occurring in Indian education today. Indigenous artistic manifestations are still not widely incorporated into educational discourse, nevertheless. The urge to investigate how Misra's work, when analyzed philosophically, might support a more comprehensive and culturally sensitive learning model that fosters not just academic but also emotional and ethical development is what led to this study.

Statement of the Problem

Indigenous knowledge systems and artistic learning methods are frequently overlooked in contemporary Indian education, which is becoming more and more disconnected from its philosophical and cultural foundations. The issue is that contemporary educational methods, which place a higher priority on memorization and practical results, do not adequately incorporate the philosophical principles that are ingrained in Indian heritage.

Additionally, the potential of visual arts especially those with deep cultural and philosophical relevance, such as Benu Misra's paintings is still neglected in the conversation surrounding education.

Review of Literature

The background and basis of this study depend on the following critical reviews: Saikia, S. (2025), provides a perceptive examination of the cultural and historical significance of Assam's fine arts in his groundbreaking work 'Chitra Bhaskajyar Kalar Sarastha aru Drasta' (Vol. I). His analysis is very helpful to this research since it covers the artistic movements in Assam and the works of important artists who are closely related to the subject. Renowned Assam's painters Sobha Brahma, Benu Misra, Neelpawan Baruah, Nani Borpujari, Madhusudhan Das, and Munindra Narayan Bhattacharyya are among those whose lives and works Saikia explores. Beyond individual biographies, his book focuses on Assam's collective artistic identity. It draws attention to these artists' achievements and their contributions to the culture of Assam, highlighting the variety of styles and influences that have influenced their works. A thorough analysis of art and sculpture, art trends, and the wider philosophical influence these artistic pursuits have had on society are also included in the text. The development of the state's fine arts schools and the enduring impact of artists who have made important contributions to the national and worldwide art scenes are also discussed. This piece is therefore essential to comprehending the function of art of Assam within the larger framework of Indian and international cultural movements.

Kandali, M. (2025), provides a thorough examination of modern and contemporary art in Assam in her book 'Batayan', a painstakingly assembled collection of critical essays on art history and art criticism written in the Assamese language and published by Bandhav, Panbazar, Guwahati. In Kandali's essay, important painters like Picasso, M.F. Hussain, and Jyoti Prasad Agarwala are discussed, along with the function of the State Exhibition that AIFACS arranged for the platinum jubilee year. An appendix that offers methodical analyses of the creations of well-known artists like Ramkinkar Baij, Sobha Brahma, Nilamoni Phukan, and Utpal Baruah enhances the book even more. Kandali's examination of these individuals is essential to this research since it offers a thorough grasp of their sociocultural influence in addition to a technical assessment of their creations. The book provides

insight into the psychological and emotional aspects of the artists' works and is an essential resource for researching the connections between art and societal development. The emphasis on Sobha Brahma's life, career, and personal journey which includes interviews and an examination of his psychological and emotional growth is especially beneficial, as these elements are essential to the research's framework.

Bhattacharyya, B.K. (2019), in 'Benu Misrar Dex Aru Kal', gives a vivid depiction of the ordinary people's daily lives, emphasizing how colors and patterns reflect the complexities of day-to-day life. An interesting account of Benu Misra's visit to Kala Bharati, where he aimed to acquire a creative and sociological perspective on his art, can be found in his study of the contemporary artist's creative path. Bhattacharyya's book is essential to this study since it not only clarifies Misra's artistic development but also delves into his upbringing as a member of a well-established artistic family. Misra's quest for artistic greatness, motivated by his profound comprehension of cultural identity, is thoroughly examined. Misra's artistic vision and its wider sociological ramifications are better understood thanks to the book's captivating examination of the intellectual inspirations behind his work.

Kalita, S. (2018), in his book 'Silpir Prithibi: Jyoti Prasadar Pora Rima Das Loi' provides a critical analysis of the works of several artists, such as Sobha Brahma, Benu Misra, and Neelpawan Baruah. With an emphasis on their combined involvement in advancing art, Kalita's work highlights the artists' advocacy in forming sociocultural, artistic, and creative worldviews. His research offers a sophisticated viewpoint on how these artists have responded to and reflected the shifting social dynamics of Assam through their creations. Kalita's book offers crucial background information for comprehending the continuous development of art and its position within the greater context of Indian modernism by examining their contributions to the larger conversation on art and culture.

Research Gap

A notable study gap remains in examining the instructional potential of regional contemporary Indian artists like Benu Misra, whose works are rich in philosophical, emotional, and socio-political elements, despite the expanding scholarly interest in aesthetic education and cultural pedagogy. The majority of the work now in publication on art in education tends to concentrate on mainstream Indian artists or Western theorists, ignoring the contributions of individuals such as Misra who provide a regionally specific yet globally appealing aesthetic perspective. Furthermore, despite the fact that Benu Misra's paintings have received critical acclaim in artistic and cultural circles, little is known about their applicability to the discussion of education, particularly with regard to fostering holistic, value-based, and reflective learning. This research fills this vacuum by providing a philosophical analysis of Misra's art as a teaching tool, connecting visual culture, traditional knowledge systems, and modern educational reform.

Importance of the Study

The growing need to rethink Indian education as a comprehensive, culturally based, and emotionally enlightening process as highlighted in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 justifies this study. Benu Misra's paintings give a profound aesthetic and philosophical vision that contains elements needed to transformative learning, such as empathy, cultural identity, critical thinking, and ethical reflection, despite the fact that art is frequently marginalized in mainstream curriculum. As a trailblazer in contemporary art of Assam, Misra's creations elicit a more profound investigation of the human condition, social consciousness, and spiritual understanding.

Objectives of the Study

1. To explore the philosophical ideas present in Benu Misra's contemporary paintings, especially those that speak to Indian ethical and metaphysical ideas.

2. To look into the potential pedagogical uses of these visual aids in contemporary Indian education.

3. To investigate the significance of aesthetic education in advancing Indian philosophically grounded value-based education.

4. To highlight an integrative educational framework that encourages students to think critically, ethically, and

reflectively through the use of visual arts like those of Benu Misra.

Research Questions

1. What fundamental moral and artistic principles come through in a philosophical analysis of Benu Misra's most important works of art?

2. In what ways does Misra's artwork appeal to the emotional, cultural, and critical intelligences that are important for a well-rounded education?

3. How does the aesthetic ideal embodied in Misra's work relate to or differ from the existing Indian educational system?

4. How might Misra's artwork serve as an example of an aesthetic experience that can be used in classroom settings to improve learning outcomes?

Hypothesis

This study's main hypothesis is that Benu Misra's paintings exhibit a unique aesthetic ethos that, when analyzed philosophically, reveals sensibilities and values like emotional depth, critical reflection, cultural rootedness, and ethical awareness that are extremely pertinent and have the potential to revolutionize Indian education today. Therefore, in addition to having aesthetic value, Misra's work serves as a model for teaching in a more humanistic, introspective, and culturally relevant educational system.

Research Methodology:

In order to investigate the artistic ethos present in Benu Misra's paintings and its instructional significance to modern Indian education, a qualitative, philosophical, and interpretative research technique was used for this study. The study uses an exploratory- analytical approach and draws on educational theory, aesthetic philosophy, and hermeneutics.

Selected works including Rain Over Brickfields, the Death Series, and Last Supper are included in the primary data. These paintings are examined using visual hermeneutics to reveal its cultural, ethical, and emotional aspects. The contextual and theoretical framework is supported by secondary materials like critical essays, exhibition reviews, and education policy documents (such NEP 2020). Recurring pedagogical patterns throughout Misra's work are found through thematic analysis, and these discoveries are integrated with current educational discourse through philosophical synthesis. A small-scale educational strategy that involves students interacting with Misra's paintings, when possible, offers empirical evidence of the transformational power of aesthetic education. Throughout the research process, ethical issues are upheld, including appropriate attribution and cultural sensitivity.

Discussion and Results:

The idea of "contemporary paintings" highlights pieces made and researched by contemporary artists. Today's artists respond to and present in a global society that is progressive, diverse, and all-encompassing. Prior to independence, some Assamese youth attended the Calcutta Government School of Art. None of them was able to practice enough to produce work that was mature enough, let alone of modern character, even though some of them completed the course.

When someone is in an aesthetic mood, they elevate natural forms above their basic biological needs and interpret them only in terms of their emotional impact; in other words, they are aesthetically beautiful. It's all about the aesthesis of color, sound, and creative quality that gives us a sense of harmony, beauty, and composition, as well as pure experiencing and feeling. (Trstenjak 1981)

Benu Misra had undoubtedly created some intriguing paintings in his previous career, and his entrance had been

greeted with much anticipation and expectation by all art aficionados. Benu Misra was an extremely gifted individual who was also a politically and socially conscious artist.

In order for art to become a fundamental component of a person's culture, aesthetic education aims to expose children to a range of artistic mediums. Kroflic contends that the arts should become more important in the spirit of postmodern epistemology and value orientations because they are an essential instrument that allows for the confrontation of existential issues and the forceful acknowledgment of many value viewpoints. (Krofli 2007)

The primary focus of the artist's work has always been man and his varied facets and existence. However, a reactive art specialist notices that in some of Benu Misra's paintings, disillusionment is depicted on par with joy. The well-known artist has a long list of brave paintings and drawings to his name. With their social and opinionated awareness and acceptance by the best art experts, his oil paintings, such as Death, Last Supper, A Hot News, and The Chair, have elevated the modern art form in Assam. Contemporary art in Assam greatly benefits from Benu Misra's upbeat outlook and ideals.

A unique field of cognition, the aesthetic dimension of experience must be recognized and understood in light of its inherent qualities and taught appropriately, that is, apart from science. (Reimer 1998) Important pieces include Rain Over Brickfields (color and form expression), The Last Supper (contemporary allegory), and the "Death" series (reflection on Assam Agitation). The characteristics drawn from art sensitivity, emotional intelligence, and reflective awareness that influence our educational experiences and learning are known as aesthetic ethos. Plato, Schiller, and Herbart were among the classical and contemporary educators who promoted the inclusion of aesthetics in the classroom as a means of developing well-rounded, compassionate people. Aesthetic education enhances creativity, critical thinking, mental wellness, and cultural understanding, per current studies. The works of Benu Misra had a seductive air of mystery. It was not necessary to be an expert in art appreciation to recognize the beauty of his creations. It was simple: a story vividly rendered with strong brushstrokes and contextually inspired colors. Misra's work was similar to a folk ballad in the Indian culture, written by the people for their own progress. (Barua 2019) Works such as "Rain Over Brickfields" demonstrate how aesthetic experience may promote sensory awareness by using color, rhythm, and form to arouse visceral feelings and a sense of unity with nature. Through allegory and symbolic imagery, the "Death" series and "Last Supper" force socio-historical analysis, just like education ought to elicit contemplation of society reality. Misra's diverse range of media, which includes illustrations and graphic designs, exemplifies adaptable aesthetics in action and serves as an example of how art may be included into education across subject areas.

Benu Misra's deft tabala playing demonstrated his metaphorical view of reality, in which the message was symbolized by the rhythm. He gave his paintings and scatches weight and grit by his participation, passion, and clever distillation of the essence. Although it was as unavoidable, his preparation work for the sculpture come later. (Acharya 2019)

The discussion of Assamese modern artists must include an analysis of the creative creativity of Benu Misra, a gentle, passionate, and kind individual. His easel and bursh were more than his family; they were his heart and soul. As artists often do, Misra took pleasure in living his life as he saw fit. (Sarma 2019)

The Last Supper (Oil work): Benu Misra's artistic philosophy and personal viewpoint are profoundly explored in this work. Although "The Last Supper," one of his most famous pieces, is a monument to his creative personality, little is known about its conception and interpretation in the general public domain. Misra's unique style, which is full of political and social criticism, gives modern Assamese art a great deal more depth. In addition to being an artistic pursuit, his work reflects a broader societal story and demonstrates the artist's keen knowledge of his surroundings. (Plate 1)

Dream Girl (Oil on Canvas): This painting transports spectators to a woman's dreamscape as she considers her life and the circumstances that have shaped it. The dream motif, which represents the subconscious and the significant impact that dreams have on day-to-day existence, lies at the heart of the piece. Misra explores the psychological and emotional aspects of the human experience using this idea as a central theme. The artist encourages us to view the dream in this picture not only as a story but also as a crucial component of the emotional

journey of the heart. (Plate 2)

Seller of Lottery Tickets (Pen & Ink): Misra’s deep interest in the commonplace yet significant issues of local culture is evident in this piece, which is a powerful portrayal of daily life. By emphasizing the characteristics of a lottery dealer, "Lottery Ticket Seller" captures the spirit of the neighborhood. Through the character of a guy who, in spite of his personal financial struggles, sells lottery tickets in an effort to give others hope, the work exposes the harsh facts of life. It gently addresses the larger societal themes of inequality and aspiration while highlighting both his own hardships and his role in giving others a chance at wealth. (Plate 3)

The Chair:A perfect illustration of Misra’s developing artistic voice, "The Chair" blends a sharp socio-political commentary with empathetic reality. The artist’s investigation of subjects including social structures, emotional loneliness, and human sorrow is embodied in this piece. Even though there aren’t many photos of the painting, the fact that it is one of Misra’s most important pieces makes it crucial to comprehending his creative process. In this setting, the chair, which is frequently used to represent authority or stability, becomes a metaphor for the conflicts and struggles that exist in both the personal and societal spheres. (Plate 4)

Peneki (Oil Painting): Produced in Benu Misra’s distinctive style, "Peneki" combines modernist methods with the customs of Assamese culture. This picture is important in relation to Misra’s entire body of work, even though it is not well documented in popular art history. "Peneki" depicts a creature that evokes both wonder and horror, demonstrating the artist’s profound understanding of Assamese mythology and emotional complexity. The art transports spectators to an intriguing realm where the lines separating the known and the unknown are blurred. (Plate 5)

Father and Son (Oil Painting): Benu Misra examines the emotional gap between a parent and kid as well as generational conflict in "Father and Son." This piece explores the intricate relationship

between tradition and change and is representative of his modernist style. The son figure symbolizes emotional longing, metamorphosis, and young rebellion, whereas the father figure stands for authority, tradition, and possibly even rigidity. As a result, the painting offers a moving commentary on family dynamics and the passage of time while also reflecting on societal structures and the changing nature of interpersonal connections. (Plate 6)

Pilot a lesson plan in which students interact with these paintings, ponder, debate, and produce before evaluating their results in terms of critical thinking, empathy, and creativity. Compare the results to traditional art-integrated teaching techniques in Indian schools. Reiterate how Benu Misra’s aesthetic vision reflects an expressive, critical, and emotional learning ethos. Encourage greater participation in Indian aesthetic education based on indigenous modern art, as represented by Misra.

Major Findings of the Stud

- Misra’s paintings evoke layers of significance that appeal to the mind, emotions, and social consciousness, making them more than just visual artifacts.

- In today’s disjointed, test-focused system, these emotional reactions can act as a link to value-based education.

- An example for interdisciplinary learning is provided by Misra’s use of socio-political allegory, color metaphors, and symbolism.

- In contrast to rote memorization, Misra’s Death Series, which examines violence and mortality during the Assam Agitation, trains pupils to approach social issues critically.

- The work of Benu Misra highlights the pressing need to mainstream aesthetic experiences, especially those that are socially conscious and culturally grounded.

- Misra’s paintings can serve as educational resources that satisfy NEP’s focus on local cultural knowledge,

creativity, and art integration.

 Misra's work provides a framework for decolonized, locally based aesthetic pedagogy by bridging the gap between tradition and modernism.

 Art is a transformative educational tool that is necessary rather than ornamental. The work of Benu Misra cultivates the critical, ethical, emotional, and aesthetic aspects of education.

 Misra's artwork presents a feasible way to include regional art and culture into official teaching.

 A curriculum that integrates aesthetic ethos might be beneficial for modern Indian education.

 A live pedagogy rooted in visual form is revealed by the philosophical examination of

Misra's paintings.

13. Conclusion and Future Direction: In summary, the innovative contemporary artist Benu Misra epitomized Assam's developing visual culture by using his distinctive artistic expressions to represent the complex conversations among people. Once thriving for centuries, traditional art forms like as miniatures, manuscript paintings, murals, sculptures, and crafts gradually declined due to political unrest and other outside considerations. When contemporary art emerged in Assam in the early 20 th century, it upended the conventional artistic landscape and caused a paradigm shift. Nonetheless, this upheaval opened the door for a vibrant development in contemporary art, both in Assam and throughout the Northeast, where the visual arts are currently seeing a renaissance of vitality and inventiveness. Benu Misra has been at the vanguard of this artistic revolution since the 1960s, contributing revolutionary ideas that have influenced Assamese contemporary art and raised a new generation of artists. His imaginative works, dedication to the advancement of the art community, and teamwork have established Assam's position within the larger Indian contemporary art movement. It will be crucial to acknowledge and encourage Assam's thriving, dynamic creative scene going forward. The future of contemporary art in the area depends on ongoing research, creativity, and intercultural interaction because of its increasing potential and promise. This will ensure its expansion and global recognition.

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1. Plate 1: The Last Supper -Oil on Canvas, 3.1”x3.1”, 1986

Image Courtesy: Gallery Benu Misra

Plate 2: Dream Girl -Oil on canvas 2.3”x3.2.”', 1988

Image Courtesy: Gallery Benu Misra

Plate 3: Lottery Ticket Seller –Pen and Ink, 1980

Image Courtesy: Gallery Benu Misra

Plate 4: The Chair - Oil on Canvas 90"x 60", 1989

Image Courtesy: Gallery Benu Misra

Plate 5: Peneki- Acrylic on Canvas, 2.10" x 4.7" , 1980

Image Courtesy: Gallery Benu Misra

Plate 6: Father and Son- Oil on Canvas, 2.10" x 2.1" , 1965

Image Courtesy: Gallery Benu Misra